

## **Tok Area Public Information Center Community Meeting – Project Update**

January 14, 2002– 5:30 p.m. – Log Community Building

Come hear the latest information and share your views on the proposal for a new Alaska Public Lands Information Center:

- **“Programming” for the center** – What types of services and information should the center provide, and how much interior and exterior space is needed for these services?
- **Location** – In what general area should the facility be located? Where are potential sites? What criteria should be used to select the site?

### **Facility Programming**

The consulting team using information provided by the participating agencies, has developed a preliminary draft assessment of space requirements for a visitors facility. In addition to the visitors facility, consideration has been given to locating the Headquarters facilities for the Tetlin Wildlife Refuge, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and perhaps local offices of the Bureau of Land Management.

The purpose of a program document is to identify required activities, estimate the area required for each activity, and to describe the functional relationships between each activity. The program document will also be used to determine site requirements, including area, location, utilities requirements, and other desired attributes. Preliminary project construction budgets can also be developed from this program information.

Preliminary estimates indicate that the visitor center will be between 11,000 and 12,000 square feet on a site that is at least 2 acres.

### **Location**

The consultant team considered five general areas in and near Tok where the facility could be located. The attached site analysis matrix compares these general areas according to specific site criteria. At the bottom of the matrix are listed the examples of potential sites that we have used to evaluate these general areas.

Selection of the “best” location for the facility will depend upon which criteria are the highest priorities. For example, a location in the center of Tok may be preferred if the most important criteria is convenience for visitors who are walking or making a “short stop” in Tok – while a more natural site outside of town may be preferred if the most important criteria is offering outdoor programs on-site that interpret the natural environment.

As a next step, the cooperating agencies will prioritize the site evaluation criteria and make a decision on which general area would be preferred for the facility. Candidate sites in that area would then be more closely evaluated and preferred site(s) identified. Public comment on the site evaluation criteria and on the initial analysis of these general areas will help the agencies with this decision.

## Project Background

State and federal agencies are working together to develop a new visitor information center in the Tok area, to provide information on public lands in Alaska and in the borderlands area in particular. The center will replace the current Alaska Public Lands Information Center (APLIC) and will include visitor information services for the Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge and Bureau of Land Management. Cooperating agencies include the Alaska Department of Community and Economic Development, Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management.

The facility will offer expanded information and services for highway travelers and serve as a springboard to visitor attractions in the region. Outdoor space will be available for interpretive programs. If the facility consolidates agency offices, it would be a “one-stop” center for information on Alaska’s public lands and visitor attractions. Agencies would benefit by sharing space, technology, expertise and building/maintenance costs.

The facility offers the potential for shared use by the Tok School and community, and will enhance the local economy. It is hoped that the project will provide opportunities for cultural interpretive facilities and possibly a cultural center in the region.

## Taking Steps to Develop the Facility

- **November 1, 2001: Community Meeting** – Public comments made during a November 2001 meeting in Tok helped focus the scope of the project and were considered in conceptual design and site evaluation for the facility.
- **January 14, 2001: Community Workshop** – The consultant team will present a summary of “programming” options for the center (which services it could provide and how much space would be needed) and to discuss site evaluation criteria. Public comment will be solicited.
- **February 2002: Project Report** – The team will prepare a project report that will recommend a general area for locating the center, give examples of potential sites in this area, show conceptual diagram of the building and site, and discuss project budgets.
- **Next Phase** – Following completion of the report by the consultant team, the participating agencies will continue their work to develop the facility, including conducting more detailed site investigations, selecting a site, and designing the facility.

## Project Contacts

### Consultant Team

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**Cooperating Agencies**

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